Countering and Dismantling Islamophobia:

A Comprehensive Guide for Individuals and Organizations

AMERICA INDIVISIBLE

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND UNDERSTANDING
ISPU

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER
Standing with American Muslims
Advancing American Ideals

WSC WESTERN STATES CENTER

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For more information about the study, please visit: ispu.org/rapid-response

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Countering and Dismantling Islamophobia:

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Introduction

Islamophobia manifests in many different anti-Muslim activities. Khaled Beydoun, a scholar of Islamophobia, identifies three types of Islamophobia: structural, individual, and dialectic.

Structural Islamophobia is reflected in institutionalized anti-Muslim legislation and further perpetuated through dialectical Islamophobia via policing, bias in media representation and in the legal system, and the use of anti-Muslim rhetoric and statements by political candidates and elected or appointed officials.

On a community level, the emergence of anti-Muslim hate groups, anti-Muslim rallies, organized and anti-mosque activity, including opposition to mosque construction or expansion, vandalism, and opposition to refugee resettlement, demonstrate Islamophobia.

At the private individual level, Islamophobia takes the form of harassment and violence. The 2018 FBI Hate Crime Statistics show an increase in violent "crimes against persons," even as the vast majority of incidents go unreported. Overall, race and ethnic origin and religious bias accounted for over 78% of all single-bias incidents in 2018. As a religious minority, an ethnically diverse group (half of whom are immigrants), and with a third of the community living in poverty, American Muslims are at a unique demographic intersection that makes them vulnerable to hate crimes. Though FBI statistics show anti-Muslim hate crimes make up 15% of all religiously motivated incidents, tellingly, the Sikh community—often because they are perceived to be Muslim—saw hate crimes triple over 2017-2018.

Several studies have shown that most Americans do not personally know a Muslim, which allows the media and public figures to distort public opinion of Islam and Muslims.

This toolkit is a collection of resources and proven best practices to empower communities and individuals to effectively counter and dismantle Islamophobia in its various forms. As a living document, the toolkit may be updated from time to time with new resources.

- ### Who is this toolkit for?

  This document is a comprehensive resource for individuals and organizations alike. Laypeople such as concerned citizens, parents, neighbors, and members of religious congregations will find tools here that empower them to challenge Islamophobia in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Educators; political, civic, religious or business community leaders; civic organizations; and any entity looking for guidance to fight bigotry in their ranks, organization, or wider communities can follow actionable items in this guidebook to help them dismantle Islamophobia.

- ### How to use this toolkit:

  This toolkit is a resource for both short-term and long-term use. In times of crisis, this guide will serve as a reactive rapid response toolkit for immediate actions to address and stymie Islamophobia. At the same time, the information contained herein provides several proactive long-term opportunities to address systemic challenges through education and coalition-oriented ideas.

Example 1: Anti-Muslim Legislation

Part 1: What is Structural Islamophobia?

Structural Islamophobia presumes that Islam is inherently violent, suggests that Muslims are incompatible with broader society, and embeds fear and suspicion of Muslims in national institutions. State actors including public officials and law enforcement agencies use the legal framework to enact policies that impact Muslim communities at the national, state, and local levels. As a social institution, the media plays its role in recreating and perpetuating stereotypes and prejudice, portraying Islam and Muslims as "others."

Manifestation: Islamophobic Legislation

In the U.S., legislation such as the Patriot Act, the Countering Violent Extremism Program, and, more recently, the Executive Order 13769 that bans Muslims' entry to the U.S. from several Muslim-majority countries are all examples of state-sanctioned targeting of Muslims as a group. They cast Muslims as dangerous outsiders whose actions should be surveilled and their movements curtailed.

In fact, the U.S. has a long history of the legalized othering of Muslims. Research suggests that anti-Shariah laws and other legislation that targets Muslims often goes hand in hand with similar efforts to manufacture bigotry and create fear of minorities such as anti-immigration and voter-ID legislation. Such measures suppress participation from racial and economic minorities and also limit freedoms for all Americans.

Counteraction: Understand, Mobilize, Collaborate

- Understand and confront the anti-Shariah movement in the U.S.
- Study the religious freedoms enshrined within the American Constitution
- Learn the difference between Muslim concepts of state and religious laws
- Mobilize to support and protect American Muslims
- Examine restrictive legislative measures and collaborate with impacted groups
- Cultivate allyship through civic action
- Organize an interfaith show of solidarity in response to new anti-Muslim legislation or legislation that cultivates Islamophobia
- Read success stories of communities finding strength through diversity

Legislation Restricting Rights Hurts All Americans

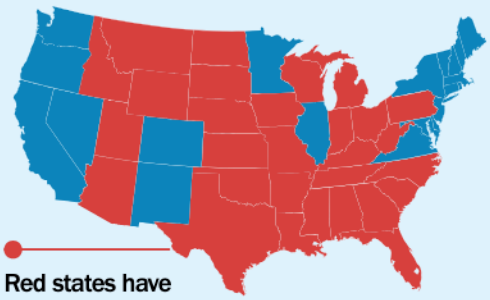
Republicans = vast majority of legislators supporting anti-Muslims bills.

Between 2011 and 2017, anti-Muslim legislation was overwhelmingly supported by Republican lawmakers, with

97% of anti-shariah bills and

96% of anti-refugee bills

sponsored or co-sponsored by Republicans.



Red states have the most restrictive agendas across issue areas we examined.

But only a small fraction of Republican state lawmakers support these measures.

3% of Republican state lawmakers across the country **(119 total)** in 2017 sponsored or co-sponsored an anti-shariah or anti-"foreign law" bill.

2% of Republican state lawmakers across the country **(81 total)** in 2017 sponsored or co-sponsored an anti-refugee bill.

These bills aren't just bad for American Muslims — they're bad for everyone.

We tracked restrictive measures in seven issue areas across all 50 states: anti-shariah, anti-refugee, abortion access, anti-immigration, anti-LGBTQ, right-to-work, and voter ID.

In 2017, **18%** of Republican state legislators sponsored or co-sponsored more than one of these restrictive laws.

Among legislators supporting anti-shariah or anti-"foreign law" bills in 2017, **85%** also sponsored or co-sponsored other restrictive bills.

Among legislators supporting anti-refugee bills in 2017, **64%** also sponsored or co-sponsored other restrictive bills.

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To read the full report visit: **www.ispu.org/visualization**

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Challenging Anti-Shariah Legislation

CASE STUDY: The "Faith in Our State" Resolution in Washington State

ISSUE: In 2013, some Washington state legislators proposed a pair of anti-Shariah bills (HB1392/SB 6118). The Washington state chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-WA) sought to pass a symbolic counter-resolution to reaffirm Washington's and America's commitment to religious freedom. The resolution was titled "Faith in Our State."

Actions:

- **Coalition formation:** CAIR-WA reached out to several faith-based, immigrant rights, and civil liberties groups with whom it had existing and trusted relationships.
- **Establish unity of purpose:** Coalition members understood that collective efforts focused on getting the resolution passed in both legislative chambers in Washington was needed.
- **Leveraging technical support:** CAIR-WA sought allies' help on an ad hoc basis, particularly in the technical area of lobbying individual law makers in the state capitol where CAIR-WA lacked capacity.
- **Co-signing letter of support:** the Washington State chapter of the ACLU, the Faith Action Network (FAN), OneAmerica, the Sikh Coalition, and the Jewish Greater Federation of Seattle co-signed CAIR-WA's letter of support for the resolution.
- **Strategic political alliances:** CAIR-WA developed alliances with religious-minded Republican lawmakers to garner support for the religious freedom-based counter-resolution.

Best Practices:

- **An informal and agile coalition** reduced the need for constant communication between partners once the purpose was well-defined.
- **Finding common ground** based on shared values with unlikely allies highlights the importance of meaningful engagement with opposition.

Results:

- "Faith in Our State" resolution **passed successfully**.
- "Faith in Our State" is the **first resolution of its kind** to be passed in the country since the rise of anti-Shariah/anti-Islam initiatives in 2009.
- Tactically, **this resolution turns the tables** on anti-Muslim activists to "expend energy defeating [an] initiative rather than [Muslims] expending energy defeating theirs."

Case study excerpted from "Strength Through Diversity: Four Cases of Local and State Level Coalition Success" by Alejandro Beutel and Jelena Jankovic for ISPU, January 2015.

Example 2: Unequal Legal Treatment

Manifestation: Unequal Treatment in the Legal System

Research reveals that Muslim-perceived perpetrators of violence are subject to more severe legal charges and up to three times the prison sentence as perpetrators not perceived to be Muslim.

Muslims are monitored under surveillance programs without suspicion or accusation of crime. Perceived Muslim perpetrators are also much more likely to be targeted for entrapment, such as undercover law enforcement operations providing them with weapons or fake explosives.

Counteraction: Challenge + Confront

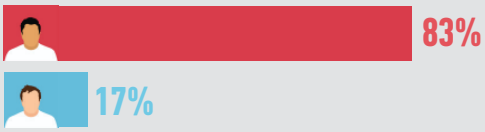
- Challenge the narratives of "terrorists" and what constitutes "terrorism."
- Understand ideologically motivated violence.
- Learn why "terrorism" is a problematic term.
- Confront bias in the criminal justice system.
- Spot double standards in framing of crime.
- Champion equal justice.
- Reject the creation of new domestic terrorism laws that would expand the government authorities and would cause further harm to marginalized communities, who are already targeted by existing domestic terrorism authorities.
- Learn about American Muslims' rejection of violence against individuals.

EQUAL TREATMENT?
MEASURING THE LEGAL AND MEDIA RESPONSES TO IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

LEGAL BIAS: For similar plots, Muslim-perceived perpetrators receive harsher legal charges and longer prison sentences than their non-Muslim counterparts.

Prosecution: Muslim-perceived perpetrators of violent plots receive harsher legal charges than non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators.

A significantly higher percentage of Muslim-perceived perpetrators of violent plots (**83%**) were prosecuted with severe legal charges than those not perceived to be Muslim (**17%**).



Charging documents **always** mentioned Muslim-associated ideologies in violent plots committed by Muslim-perceived perpetrators, while just **half** of non-Muslim-perceived cases referenced perpetrator ideology in charging documents. Ideologies behind the remaining half surfaced during legal proceedings or were reported by the press.

Terrorism-related charges can carry optional boosts to sentences for prosecutors to pursue if they argue a case was terrorism. This occurred in

7 of 12 Muslim-perceived cases
3 of 12 non-Muslim-perceived cases

Sentencing: Muslim-perceived perpetrators of violent plots receive longer prison sentences than non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators.

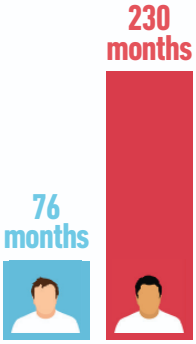
Average prison sentences issued for Muslim-perceived perpetrators of violent plots (**211 months**) were

4 TIMES

the length of those issued for non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators of violent plots (**53 months**).

Prosecutors sought an average sentence of **76 months** for non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators and **230 months** for Muslim-perceived perpetrators,

3 TIMES the length.



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EQUAL TREATMENT?
MEASURING THE LEGAL AND MEDIA RESPONSES TO IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

LAW ENFORCEMENT TACTICS: Undercover law enforcement or informants provided means of the crime in a majority of Muslim-perceived cases of violent plots, but in very few non-Muslim-perceived cases.

Undercover law enforcement or informants provided the means of the crime (e.g., firearm or inert bomb) in 66% of convictions in plots involving a Muslim-perceived perpetrator, but in only 17% of non-Muslim-perceived cases. However, Muslim-perceived perpetrators were charged more often with attempting to create or use "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD), which leads to a longer prison sentence.

Muslim-perceived bomb plots were charged as "weapons of mass destruction"

MORE THAN 3 TIMES

as often as **non-Muslim-perceived plots.**

While WMD charges usually lead to over a **20 YEAR SENTENCE**

non-WMD defendants typically receive less than **5 YEARS IN PRISON.**

NON-MUSLIM-PERCEIVED perpetrators often received lesser charges even when they obtained or made their own military-grade explosives.

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To read the full report visit: **www.ispu.org/equaltreatment**

Example 3: Bias in the Media

Manifestation: Media Bias

Even in the pre-9/11 era, American media demonstrated a strong anti-Muslim bent. Research consistently reveals that Muslims are among the most negatively portrayed minority groups in America.

Studies show that in media portrayals of Muslim women, negative stereotypes abound.

Perpetrators perceived as Muslim receive more than seven times the media coverage compared to non-Muslim perpetrators for a similar crime.

Counteraction: Think Critically + Demand Truth

- Develop media literacy and learn about how the media perpetuates Islamophobic views.
- Become familiar with the extent of prejudice in legal and media responses to ideologically motivated violence.
- Understand the facts about American Muslim women.
- Demand unbiased coverage from news outlets.
- As part of media, employ successful media approaches.

EQUAL TREATMENT?
MEASURING THE LEGAL AND MEDIA RESPONSES TO IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

MEDIA BIAS: Perpetrators identified as Muslim have qualitatively different media coverage than perpetrators not identified as Muslim.

Amount of coverage: Muslim-perceived perpetrators receive, on average, much more media coverage than non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators.

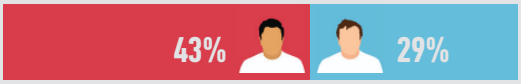
Analysis of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* archives showed that in cases of violent ideological plots that were not carried out, Muslim-perceived perpetrators received an average of

770% **more media coverage** than non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators.

The average number of articles written about **Muslim-perceived perpetrators** involved in primary incidents was

MORE THAN DOUBLE

the average number of articles written about **non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators.**



In high-intensity incidents,* Muslim-perceived incidents received a significantly higher average number of articles per casualty **(average of 43, excluding Boston bombing)** compared to non-Muslim-perceived incidents **(average of 29)**.

*See Report Summary & Methodology on back for definition of "high-intensity incidents"

Press releases: The U.S. Department of Justice issued press releases from its national office six times as often in regards to violent plots by Muslim-perceived perpetrators than violent plots by non-Muslim-perceived perpetrators.

Justice Department national press releases referenced ideology more often in releases about Muslim-perceived violent plots. **Half of these** included Muslim-associated ideologies in the headline or first paragraph.

ONLY A QUARTER

of non-Muslim-perceived plots had national press releases, and **all** mentioned the perpetrator's identity further into the release.

Local FBI Field Office and U.S. Attorney Office issued press releases at more even rates:

75% **for Muslim-perceived cases** and
83% **for non-Muslim-perceived cases.**

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To read the full report visit: **www.ispu.org/equaltreatment**

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Example 4: Anti-Muslim Political Rhetoric

Manifestation: Elected Officials Using Anti-Muslim Rhetoric

News reports have documented elected officials openly exhibiting Islamophobic views.

There is growing evidence of widespread use of anti-Muslim rhetoric in 2017-2018 election races — a practice popular with politicians, but not voters, and ultimately a losing strategy.

Some research suggests a correlation between anti-Muslim rhetoric in the 2016 U.S. election cycle and an uptick in violent crime. Other organizations find recent violence to be the result of decades-long Islamophobic and xenophobic sentiments expressed by anti-Muslim groups and the media over time, as well as officials in the Trump administration of late.

Counteraction: Fight Fear with Facts

- Know your elected and campaigning officials' stances and vote against officials espousing hate.
- Share facts over fear to counter bigotry and fear mongering.
- Lift your voice publicly against hate and in support of Muslims through op-eds, letters to the editors, and public support for freedom of religion.
- Encourage the implementation of anti-Islamophobia campaigns in your community.
- Learn about and connect with organizations that work towards strength through unity.

Fighting Structural Islamophobia

CASE STUDY: Communities United for Police Reform: *New York City Police Department Reform: "Stop and Frisk" and Muslim Surveillance Operations*

ISSUE: "Stop, Question and Frisk", a crime control tactic of the NYPD used to temporarily detain, question, and search pedestrians if an officer has reasonable suspicion that the pedestrian in question has "committed, is committing, or is about to commit a felony or a Penal Law misdemeanor." Research found that Black and Latino people were disproportionately and overwhelmingly targeted and were substantially more likely than white people to be frisked and to have physical force used against them. In addition to concerns over civil rights and civil liberties, data suggests the program is ineffective in the short-term and in the long-term, possibly counterproductive to controlling crime.

In 2011, a series of investigative reports revealed secret widespread NYPD **surveillance of Muslims**. Rather than conducting targeted, evidence-led investigations of specific criminal activity, the research found "police subjected entire neighborhoods to surveillance and scrutiny, often because of the ethnicity of the residents, not because of any accusations of crimes. Hundreds of mosques and Muslim student groups were investigated and dozens were infiltrated."

Actions:

- **Bridge-building:** form coalitions through solidarity events to bring together Muslim and non-Muslim groups.
- **Streamlined and coordinated reform efforts:** Align reform agendas across various groups, alliances between grassroots groups and City Council lawmakers.

Best Practices:

- **Formal leadership and well-established division of labor** across partners ensure clarity.
- **Diverse set of capabilities and funding** amongst collaborators: the effort utilized strengths of each member's unique skills — technical, legal, organizational, and financial.
- **Deploy multiple tactics and strategies** such as lawsuit, community organization, advocacy, awareness campaign, demonstrations, and press conferences.

Results:

- All four proposed Community Safety Act (CSA) bills **were passed**.
- American Muslims **achieved strategic successes** through the organization, mobilization, and inclusion of American Muslims in effective coalition advocacy work.
- Officials reported the **disbanding of the specific unit conducting unchecked surveillance** on Muslim communities (though surveillance is ongoing).

Example 5: Resisting Refugees

Manifestation: Resistance to Refugee Resettlement

In 2015, then-candidate Donald Trump called for a ban on the entry of Muslims in the U.S. As part of the recent trend of structural Islamophobia reflected in Trump's immigration policy, the number of refugees admitted to the U.S., particularly Muslims, has fallen to the lowest levels since the current refugee program was implemented in 1980.

Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric is divisive and politicizes refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. There is evidence of elected officials advocating for the restriction of admittance of Syrian refugees to the U.S. following ideologically motivated attacks elsewhere in the world, showing bias towards an entire faith group due to the actions of a few. Research suggests that previously neutral communities are provoked to oppose refugee resettlement on the basis of partisanship.

Counteraction: Welcome + Support Refugees

- Dispel falsehoods surrounding immigration and crime.
- Understand the economic contributions of refugees and immigrants.
- Learn how refugees support and enrich American cities.
- Advocate to welcome refugees in your locality, state, and country.
- Welcome refugees as valuable new members of American society.
- Show community support for refugees.

Example 6: Hate Gatherings

Part 2: What is Private Islamophobia?

Private Islamophobia is the fear, suspicion, and violent targeting of Muslims by private actors — individuals or institutions acting independently of the state. Islamophobia scholar Khaled Beydoun argues that policies, rhetoric, and media representations of Muslims enable and embolden private Islamophobia to unprecedented levels.

Manifestation: Hate Groups + Hate Rallies

Though relatively new, anti-Muslim hate groups have gained traction in recent years. Research has exposed a well-funded and organized Islamophobia network spurring and fueling anti-Muslim activity in various spheres. Organizations such as ACT for America and Understanding the Threat hold anti-Muslim rallies and talks across the U.S.

Counteraction: Spread Love + Cultivate Peace

- Understand the depth and breadth of the Islamophobia industry and how to diminish its strength.
- Inspire your community to fight hate with love.
- Be a civic neighbor and engage meaningfully with your Muslim community.
- Take collaborative action to abort or counter hate-based events.
- Push for local resolutions to create a community inhospitable to hate.
- Exert public pressure to diminish the efficacy of Islamophobic events.

How to Respond to Anti-Muslim Rallies in Your Area

(infographic is based on this document)

- Collaborate with like-minded organizations to respond to hate-based events in unification.
- Create and publicize a collective statement of shared values or one for your organization.
- Host an alternate community-centered event.
- Organize a counter-protest.
- Engage with the media to expose bigotry and Islamophobia.
- Pressure organizers and hosts to cancel hate-based events.
- Focus on positive messages about unity and freedom.

Curbing Hate Speech

CASE STUDY: John Guandolo Tour Cancellation

ISSUE: John Guandolo, an anti-Muslim ex-FBI agent is a self-appointed counter-terrorism expert. He offers Islamophobic training courses to law enforcement and civilians across the U.S. under his organization Understanding The Threat (UTT). Harboring aggressive far-right views, Guandolo advocates for American Muslims to be deprived of their First Amendment rights and alleges that they are anti-American and hold ties to "terrorist organizations" overseas. In April of 2018, Guandolo scheduled a speaking tour of five midwestern cities. Each event was held at a hotel.

Actions:

- **Coalition-building:** an alliance was formed with local community groups and civil rights organizations to plan a collaborative effort.
- **Public awareness:** online channels were used to educate local communities about the events taking place and their damaging consequences
- **Call-in campaign:** collective action planners encouraged en masse phone calls to hotels and tour venues to cancel events.
- **Counter-rally:** Organizers planned a counter-rally opposite a hotel scheduled to host one of the tour events.

Results:

- **Four of the five events were cancelled** by hotels who refused to host the gathering.
- All four hotels **cited public calls against bigotry** as the reason for cancellation.
- One hotel **cited the counter rally and negative publicity** as the reason for refusing to host the event.

Best Practices:

- **Focus on local relationships:** In one instance, callers emphasized that the anti-Muslim event would create lasting damage and drive away business as the hotel was a popular wedding venue for the local American Muslim community.

Example 7: Communities Opposing Mosques

Manifestation: Mosque Opposition

Efforts to construct new mosques or expand existing Islamic centers have been met with hostility for many years. Opposition to the so-called Ground Zero mosque has been widely documented. In its shadow, several smaller mosques have also suffered a similar fate.

Masked as environmental or traffic concerns, resistance to mosques often carries a distinct "us vs. them" undertone nonetheless. At times, the city meetings held to address zoning and permit issues are targeted by Islamophobes.

Counteraction: Plan + Prepare

- Familiarize yourself with common challenges to mosque construction and ways to manage them.
- Pre-empt opposition and strategize effectively to secure municipal approvals for building mosques.
- Mobilize community support prior to publicizing new plans.
- Nurture strong interfaith coalitions.
- Be an upstanding neighbor in faith.
- Develop robust relationships with neighbors and allies that last long after initial hurdles have been overcome.

HOW A MOSQUE MANAGED A CRISIS

REIMAGINING MUSLIM SPACES

How should a mosque respond when the unthinkable becomes a reality?

CASE STUDY: The ISBCC Response to the Boston Marathon Bombing

On April 15, 2013, a terrorist attack targeting the iconic Boston Marathon kills 3 and injures more than 260 people.

News is announced that the attackers identified themselves as Muslim.

The Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) must navigate the ensuing crisis by engaging and working with all parties involved:

- News media
- Law enforcement
- Government officials
- Muslim and interfaith communities

What does ISBCC's response teach about navigating a crisis?

Before a Crisis:

1. **Build Strong Relationships** with media, law enforcement, government agencies, and interfaith leaders.
2. **Conduct Media Trainings** for community members to build capacity for effective media engagement.
3. **Be Prepared** with a crisis management plan and run practice drills.

During a Crisis:

1. **Communicate Regularly** with law enforcement and government agencies to help provide information and support without sacrificing respect for civil rights and legal protections.
2. **Reach Out** to allies and professionals both inside and outside the Muslim community. Be prepared to invest in the services of professional agencies to help navigate the crisis.
3. **Be Consistent** in communicating a clear and coherent message to the media that highlights American Muslims' identity as Americans, not Others.
4. **Engage the Community** such that in times of crises, community members can be easily identified to carry out tasks, like working with the media or organizing relevant committees.
5. **Focus on Agility** by streamlining internal processes and decision-making for effective crisis management.
6. **Provide Support** to leaders at the frontline of the crisis. Mental health support and community backing help leaders manage the stress of the situation.

After a Crisis:

1. **Reinforce the Message Through Action** by proactively planning for events such as anniversaries of the crisis or memorials.

> "The success of how the Boston bombing was handled started before the bombing."
>
> - Imam Suhaib Webb, former ISBCC Senior Imam

> "During 'the marathon crisis we were telling people that we were Bostonians, the anniversary we showed them how we were Bostonians."
>
> - Yusufi Vali, ISBCC Executive Director

Interested in reimagining your Muslim space? Visit: www.ispu.org/RMS.

Being an Upstanding Neighbor in Faith

CASE STUDY: Heartsong Church and Memphis Islamic Center

ISSUE: In 2014, the Memphis Islamic Center purchased a large parcel of land in Cordova, an area known for its density of churches deep in the Bible Belt. Pastor Steve Stone of Heartsong Church realized that his congregation would be the closest neighbors to the proposed mosque. He was confronted with balancing misgivings about having an Islamic center nearby with leading his congregation through this situation as a person of faith.

Actions:

- **Gesture of warmth:** Pastor Stone decided to be an upstander and show friendship to his new Muslim neighbors with a welcome sign.
- **Faith-based counseling through uncertainty:** Through scripture, Pastor Stone helped members of his church navigate the trepidation they felt at their pastor's support for Muslims.
- **Tangible help:** When the Islamic center construction fell behind schedule, Heartsong Church offered their building to the Muslim community for prayers during Ramadan.

Results:

- The **fear of being unwelcomed** among the Muslim leadership and congregation dissipated immediately upon witnessing the outward sign of support by Heartsong Church.
- A **lasting warm relationship** between the leaders of the two religious organizations developed.
- Authentic connection between the members of the two houses of worship grew, **built on friendship, trust, and community service**.

Example 8: Anti-Mosque Activity

Manifestation: Mosque Vandalism

There have been well-documented and widespread instances of mosque vandalism across the U.S. In recent years, anti-mosque activity has increased. Instances of arson, hateful graffiti, and break-ins are common forms of vandalism.

Counteraction: Show Solidarity

- Organize a community show of support.
- Host interfaith efforts to rally around Muslim community.
- Involve and include elected officials in public displays of solidarity.

Responding to Mosque Vandalism

CASE STUDY: Interfaith Response to Louisville Mosque Graffiti

ISSUE: In September 2015, the Islamic Center of Louisville, Kentucky, was vandalized with threatening graffiti in apparent response to antisemitic attacks in France.

Actions:

- **Unified response:** The Mayor and local civic and faith leaders called a press conference to denounce the hateful vandalism.
- **Organization of designated "clean up" day:** Interfaith leaders and Mayor Fischer called on the community to help paint over the graffiti at a designated time.

Best Practices:

- **Longstanding interfaith relationships** ensured strong support and turnout in the Muslim community's time of need.

Results:

- Locals **donated** paint and supplies for the clean up effort.
- Nearly 1,000 community members **attended** the clean-up day to paint over the graffiti.
- Representatives from all major faith congregations **showed support** in person.
- City authorities **pitched in** for parking management and neighbors opened parking areas to enable attendees.

Example 9: Assaults and Harassment

Manifestation: Harassment + Violence

In the years since the events of 9/11, assaults against Muslims have soared. In the past, some incidents of anti-Muslim harassment have turned deadly. In addition to individual occurrences, Muslim worshippers are also intimidated outside their mosques.

There is a deep psychological impact of living under the threat of violence stemming from Islamophobia, even as many American Muslim communities emerge from setbacks stronger than before. In particular, the results of the 2016 election have made Muslims and Jews vulnerable to fear and anxiety, with an added burden of suffering on Muslim women. Alarmingly, even American Muslim children face faith-based bullying at schools from educators and peers.

Counteraction: Know + Protect Your Muslim Neighbor

- If possible, intervene if you see anti-Muslim harassment.
- Learn how to reach out to and connect with Muslim neighbors.
- Educate yourself and your community about American Muslims and their diversity.
- Challenge Islamophobia in your circle.
- Fight religion-based bullying at schools.
- Join community initiatives to express love in the face of adversity.

Part 3: Pitfalls + Best Practices

In order to respond to and dismantle Islamophobia effectively, narratives about Islam and Muslims must be widened and inclusive. It is important to understand that all Muslims are not "newcomers" to the U.S., and that anti-Muslim sentiment goes far beyond the security lens and women's rights.

- Center the voices of Muslims — men and women — and give them space to speak for themselves.
- Learn how to be a good ally from American Muslim and Arab American leaders.
- Do your own research and do not ask marginalized communities to shoulder the burden of educating others.
- Avoid common mistakes made by interfaith allies.
- Help American Muslim women fight Islamophobia, not Islam.
- Steer clear of performative allyship.
- Study success stories of collaborative efforts to fight Islamophobia.

Best Practices to Fight Islamophobia

Learn about **structural Islamophobia,** such as Islamophobic legislation, unfair treatment in the legal system, media bias, anti-Muslim political rhetoric, and resistance to refugee resettlement and **private Islamophobia** including hate group activities, mosque opposition, mosque vandalism, harassment, and violence.

Educate yourself and others about Islam and Muslims using authentic sources **+ know** the anti-Shariah movement, ideologically motivated violence, facts about immigration and crime, media double standards, the Islamophobia industry, and challenges to mosques.

Speak up **against** injustice, biased media coverage, unfair legislation, hate speech, mosque vandalism, and harassment **in favor of** minorities, immigrants, refugees, and civil and human rights.

Organize by mobilizing neighbors and communities, collaborating across civic groups, cultivating interfaith allies, and holding public displays of solidarity.

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America Indivisible

America Indivisible is a non-partisan, non-profit coalition effort to address rising bigotry against members of Muslim communities and those who appear to be Muslim from Black, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian American communities by reinforcing the American values of equality, pluralism, and strength through diversity.

Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)

ISPU provides objective research and education about American Muslims to support well-informed dialogue and decision-making. Our research aims to educate the general public and enable community change agents, the media, and policymakers to make evidence-based decisions.

Shoulder to Shoulder

Shoulder to Shoulder is a national coalition-based campaign of religious denominations and faith-based organizations and communities that are committed to ending discrimination and violence against Muslims in the United States by equipping, connecting, and mobilizing faith leaders to effectively take action.

Western States Center

Based in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain States, Western States Center works nationwide to strengthen inclusive democracy so all people can live, love, worship, and work free from fear.